

**CLAIMS**

1. A snowboard boot binding, comprising:  
a base having a foot receiving area and including a floor that is constructed and  
5 arranged for mounting said snowboard boot binding to a snowboard, said snowboard  
binding including a rear support member for surrounding at least a portion of a rider's  
leg and which extends rearwardly and upwardly from said base floor, wherein an  
opening extends between a rearward edge of said base floor and said rear support  
member, said opening adapted to receive at least a portion of a heel end of a snowboard  
10 boot that has been inserted into said snowboard boot binding;  
a snow gasket for covering at least a portion of said opening to prevent snow  
from passing through said opening and accumulating on said base floor; and  
a boot engagement member for securing the snowboard boot to said snowboard  
boot binding.
- 15 2. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 1, wherein said rear support  
member is a heel hoop.
3. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 2, wherein said rear support  
member is integrally formed with said base.
4. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 2, wherein said rear support  
20 member is a separate and distinct component from said base.
5. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 1, wherein said snow gasket  
includes a floor and a bottom of said snow gasket floor is located above a bottom of said  
rearward edge of said base floor.
6. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 1, wherein said snow gasket  
25 includes a rear wall, a lateral sidewall, a medial sidewall, and a floor.
7. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 1, wherein said snow gasket  
includes a frame.
8. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 1, wherein said snow gasket  
has a variable shape.
- 30 9. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 1, wherein said snow gasket  
is compliant and will assume the general shape of a heel end of said snowboard boot  
upon insertion of said snowboard boot into said snowboard boot binding.

10. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 1, wherein said snow gasket is removably attached to said base.

11. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 1, wherein said snow gasket is selected from the group of natural fabrics, plastic fabrics, elastomeric fabrics, and combinations of any of the foregoing.

12. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 11, wherein said snow gasket includes a mesh-type fabric.

13. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 1, wherein said base includes a medial sidewall and a lateral sidewall, and said snow gasket extends from at least one of said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said base floor.

14. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 13, wherein said snow gasket extends from two of said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said base floor.

15. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 13, wherein said snow gasket extends from said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said base floor.

16. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 1, wherein said snow gasket includes predetermined regions having enhanced properties compared to other regions of said snow gasket, said enhanced properties including at least one of durability, abrasion resistance, and stretch.

17. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 16, wherein an upper portion of said snow gasket has better stretch properties than a lower or intermediate portion of said snow gasket.

18. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 16, wherein said intermediate portion of said snow gasket has better abrasion resistance properties than each of a top portion and a lower portion of said snow gasket.

19. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 16, wherein said lower portion has better durability properties than each of an intermediate portion and an upper portion of said snow gasket.

20. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 1, wherein said snow gasket includes a lower end and an upper end, and said snow gasket is biased towards said upper end.

21. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 1, wherein said boot engagement member includes at least one of a strap-type member and a strapless member.

22. A snowboard boot binding, comprising:

5 a baseplate including a floor for mounting to a snowboard, a medial sidewall, a lateral sidewall, and a heel hoop for surrounding at least a portion of a rider's leg and which extends rearwardly and upwardly from said baseplate floor, wherein an opening extends between said heel hoop and a rearward edge of said floor that is adapted to receive at least a portion of a heel end of a snowboard boot that has been inserted into  
10 said snowboard boot binding;

a snow gasket mounted to said baseplate and having a floor with a bottom surface that is located above a bottom surface of said rearward edge of said baseplate floor; and  
a boot engagement member for securing the snowboard boot to said snowboard boot binding.

15 23. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 22, wherein said snow gasket includes a frame.

24. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 22, wherein said snow gasket has a variable shape.

25. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 22, wherein said snow  
20 gasket is compliant and will assume the general shape of a heel end of said snowboard boot upon insertion of said snowboard boot into said snowboard boot binding.

26. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 22, wherein said snow gasket is removably mounted to said base.

27. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 22, wherein said snow  
25 gasket is selected from the group of natural fabrics, plastic fabrics, elastomeric fabrics, and combinations of any of the foregoing.

28. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 27, wherein said snow gasket includes a mesh-type fabric.

29. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 22, wherein said snow  
30 gasket extends from at least one of said medial baseplate sidewall, said lateral baseplate sidewall, and said baseplate floor.

30. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 29, wherein said snow gasket extends from two of said medial baseplate sidewall, said lateral baseplate sidewall and said baseplate floor.

31. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 29, wherein said snow  
5 gasket extends from said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said base floor.

32. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 22, wherein said snow gasket includes predetermined regions having enhanced properties compared to other regions of said snow gasket, said enhanced properties including at least one of durability, abrasion resistance, and stretch.

10 33. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 32, wherein an upper portion of said snow gasket has better stretch properties than a lower or intermediate portion of said snow gasket.

34. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 32, wherein said  
intermediate portion of said snow gasket has better abrasion resistance properties than  
15 each of a top portion and a lower portion of said snow gasket.

35. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 32, wherein said lower portion of said snow gasket has better durability properties than each of an intermediate portion and an upper portion of said snow gasket.

36. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 22, wherein said snow  
20 gasket includes a lower end and an upper end, and said snow gasket is biased towards said upper end.

37. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 22, wherein said boot engagement member includes at least one of a strap-type member and a strapless member.

25 38. A snowboard boot binding, comprising:

a baseplate including a floor for mounting said binding to a snowboard and having a medial sidewall and a lateral sidewall, said baseplate including an at least partially enclosed heel end, with a floor having a bottom surface that is adapted to receive at least a portion of a heel end of a snowboard boot that has been inserted into  
30 said snowboard boot binding, said floor having a substantially planar mid-foot region, wherein a bottom surface of said enclosed heel end extends above a bottom surface of said baseplate floor at said planar mid-foot region; and

a boot engagement member for securing the snowboard boot to said snowboard boot binding.

39. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 38, wherein said at least partially enclosed heel end includes a heel hoop for surrounding at least a portion of a rider's leg, said heel hoop extending rearwardly and upwardly from said baseplate floor, and an opening extending between a rearward edge of said baseplate floor and said heel hoop.

40. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 39, wherein said at least partially enclosed heel end includes a snow gasket at least partially covering said opening.

41. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 40, wherein said snow gasket completely covers said opening.

42. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 40, wherein said snow gasket has a cup shape.

43. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 40, wherein said snow gasket includes a frame.

44. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 40, wherein said snow gasket has a variable shape.

45. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 40, wherein said snow gasket is compliant and will assume the general shape of a heel end of said snowboard boot upon insertion of said snowboard boot into said snowboard boot binding.

46. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 40, wherein said snow gasket is removably attached to said baseplate.

47. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 40, wherein said snow gasket is selected from the group of natural fabrics, plastic fabrics, elastomeric fabrics, and combinations of any of the foregoing.

48. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 47, wherein said snow gasket includes a mesh-type fabric.

49. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 40, wherein said snow gasket extends from at least one of said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said baseplate floor.

50. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 49, wherein said snow gasket extends from two of said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall and said base floor.

51. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 49, wherein said snow gasket extends from said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said baseplate floor.

52. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 40, wherein said snow gasket includes predetermined regions having enhanced properties compared to other regions of said snow gasket, said enhanced properties including at least one of durability, abrasion resistance, and stretch.

53. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 52, wherein an upper portion of said snow gasket has better stretch properties than a lower or intermediate portion of said snow gasket.

54. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 52, wherein said intermediate portion of said snow gasket has better abrasion resistance properties than each of a top portion and a lower portion of said snow gasket.

55. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 52, wherein said lower portion of said snow gasket has better durability properties than each of an intermediate portion and an upper portion of said snow gasket.

56. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 40, wherein said snow gasket includes a lower end and an upper end, and said snow gasket is biased towards said upper end.

57. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 38, wherein said boot engagement member includes at least one of a strap-type member and a strapless member.

58. A snowboard boot binding, comprising:

a baseplate including a floor for mounting said snowboard boot binding to a snowboard, said baseplate having a rigid medial sidewall, a rigid lateral sidewall, and an at least partially enclosed heel end that is adapted to receive at least a portion of a heel end of a snowboard boot that has been inserted into said snowboard boot binding, said at least partially enclosed heel end having a variable shape; and

at least one boot engagement member for securing a snowboard boot to said snowboard binding.

59. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 58, wherein said at least partially enclosed heel end includes a rigid heel hoop for surrounding at least a portion of a rider's leg, said heel hoop extending rearwardly and upwardly from said baseplate

floor, and an opening extending between a rearward edge of said baseplate floor and said heel hoop.

60. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 59, wherein said at least partially enclosed heel end includes a snow gasket at least partially covering said opening.

61. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 60, wherein said snow gasket completely covers said opening.

62. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 60, wherein said snow gasket has a rear wall, a lateral sidewall, a medial sidewall, and a floor.

63. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 60, wherein said snow gasket includes a frame.

64. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 60, wherein said snow gasket is less rigid than each of said medial sidewall and said lateral sidewall.

65. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 60, wherein said snow gasket is compliant and will assume the general shape of a heel end of the snowboard boot upon insertion of the snowboard boot into said snowboard boot binding.

66. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 60, wherein said snow gasket is removably attached to said baseplate.

67. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 60, wherein said snow gasket is selected from the group of natural fabrics, plastic fabrics, elastomeric fabrics, and combinations of any of the foregoing.

68. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 67, wherein said snow gasket includes a mesh-type fabric.

69. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 60, wherein said snow gasket extends from at least one of said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said baseplate floor.

70. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 69, wherein said snow gasket extends from two of said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said baseplate floor.

71. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 69, wherein said snow gasket extends from said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said baseplate floor.

72. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 60, wherein said snow gasket includes predetermined regions having enhanced properties compared to other

regions of said snow gasket, said enhanced properties including at least one of durability, abrasion resistance, and stretch.

73. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 72, wherein an upper portion of said snow gasket has better stretch properties than a lower or intermediate  
5 portion of said snow gasket.

74. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 72, wherein said intermediate portion of said snow gasket has better abrasion resistance properties than each of a top portion and a lower portion of said snow gasket.

75. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 72, wherein said lower  
10 portion of said snow gasket has better durability properties than each of an intermediate portion and an upper portion of said snow gasket.

76. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 60, wherein said snow gasket includes a lower end and an upper end, and said snow gasket is biased towards said upper end.

77. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 58, wherein said boot  
15 engagement member includes at least one of a strap-type member and a strapless member.

78. A snowboard boot binding, comprising:  
a baseplate including a floor for mounting said snowboard boot binding to a  
20 snowboard, a medial sidewall, and a lateral sidewall, wherein said floor has a mid-foot region;

an at least partially enclosed heel end that is adapted to receive at least a portion of a heel end of a snowboard boot that has been inserted into said snowboard boot binding, said at least partially enclosed heel end formed from a different material than  
25 any of said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said floor mid-foot region; and  
at least one boot engagement member for securing a snowboard boot to said snowboard binding.

79. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 78, wherein said at least partially enclosed heel end includes a rigid heel hoop for surrounding at least a portion of  
30 a rider's leg, said heel hoop extending rearwardly and upwardly from said baseplate floor, and an opening extending between a rearward edge of said baseplate floor and said heel hoop.



80. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 79, wherein said at least partially enclosed heel end further includes a snow gasket at least partially covering said opening.

81. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 80, wherein said snow  
5 gasket completely covers said opening.

82. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 80, wherein said snow gasket has a rear wall, a medial sidewall, a lateral sidewall, and a floor.

83. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 80, wherein said snow gasket includes a frame.

10 84. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 80, wherein said snow gasket is less rigid than said medial sidewall and said lateral sidewall.

85. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 80, wherein said snow gasket is compliant and will assume the general shape of a heel end of said snowboard boot upon insertion of said snowboard boot into said snowboard boot binding.

15 86. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 80, wherein said snow gasket is removably attached to said baseplate.

87. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 80, wherein said snow gasket is selected from the group of natural fabrics, plastic fabrics, elastomeric fabrics, and combinations of any of the foregoing.

20 88. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 87, wherein said snow gasket includes a mesh-type fabric.

89. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 80, wherein said snow gasket extends from at least one of said medial wall, said lateral wall, and said baseplate floor.

25 90. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 89, wherein said snow gasket extends from two of said medial wall, said lateral wall and said baseplate floor.

91. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 89, wherein said snow gasket extends from said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said baseplate floor.

92. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 80, wherein said snow  
30 gasket includes predetermined regions having enhanced properties compared to other regions of said snow gasket, said enhanced properties including at least one of durability, abrasion resistance, and stretch.

93. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 92, wherein an upper portion of said snow gasket has better stretch properties than a lower or intermediate portion of said snow gasket.

94. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 92, wherein said  
5 intermediate portion of said snow gasket has better abrasion resistance properties than each of a top portion and a lower portion of said snow gasket.

95. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 92, wherein said lower portion of said snow gasket has better durability properties than each of an intermediate portion and an upper portion of said snow gasket.

10 96. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 80, wherein said snow gasket includes a lower end and an upper end, and said snow gasket is biased towards said upper end.

97. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 78, wherein said boot  
15 engagement member includes at least one of a strap-type member and a strapless member.

98. A snowboard boot binding, comprising:  
a baseplate including a floor for mounting said snowboard boot binding to a  
snowboard, a medial sidewall, a lateral sidewall, a heel hoop for surrounding at least a  
portion of a rider's leg and which extends rearwardly and upwardly from said baseplate  
20 floor, and an opening extending between a rearward edge of said baseplate floor and said heel hoop;

a snow gasket attached to said snowboard boot binding and extending at least  
partially between said heel hoop and said baseplate floor, said snow gasket being a  
distinct and independent component from said heel hoop and said baseplate floor; and  
25 a boot engagement member for securing said snowboard boot to said snowboard boot binding.

99. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 98, wherein said snow gasket is rigid.

100. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 98, wherein said snow  
30 gasket has an outer shape that plugs said opening.

101. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 98, wherein said snow gasket is made from the same material as at least one of said heel hoop and said baseplate floor.

102. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 101, wherein said snow gasket has a floor and an edge adjacent said rearward edge of said baseplate floor, and wherein a bottom of said snow gasket floor at said adjacent edge is located above a bottom of said rearward edge of said baseplate floor.

5 103. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 98, wherein said snow gasket completely covers said opening.

104. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 98, wherein said snow gasket has a cup shape.

10 105. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 98, wherein said snow gasket includes a frame.

106. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 98, wherein said snow gasket is less rigid than said medial sidewall and said lateral sidewall.

107. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 98, wherein said snow gasket is compliant and will assume the general shape of a heel end of said snowboard  
15 boot upon insertion of said snowboard boot into said snowboard boot binding.

108. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 98, wherein said snow gasket is removably attached to said baseplate.

109. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 98, wherein said snow gasket is selected from the group of natural fabrics, plastic fabrics, elastomeric fabrics,  
20 and combinations of any of the foregoing.

110. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 109, wherein said snow gasket includes a mesh-type fabric.

111. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 98, wherein said snow gasket extends from at least one of said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said  
25 baseplate floor.

112. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 111, wherein said snow gasket extends from two of said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said baseplate floor.

113. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 111, wherein said snow gasket extends from said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said baseplate floor.  
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114. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 98, wherein said snow gasket includes predetermined regions having enhanced properties compared to other

regions of said snow gasket, said enhanced properties including at least one of durability, abrasion resistance, and stretch.

115. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 114, wherein an upper portion of said snow gasket has better stretch properties than a lower or intermediate  
5 portion of said snow gasket.

116. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 114, wherein said intermediate portion of said snow gasket has better abrasion resistance properties than each of a top portion and a lower portion of said snow gasket.

117. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 114, wherein said lower  
10 portion of said snow gasket has better durability properties than each of an intermediate portion and an upper portion of said snow gasket.

118. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 98, wherein said snow gasket includes a lower end and an upper end, and said snow gasket is biased towards said upper end.

119. The snowboard boot binding recited in claim 98, wherein said boot  
15 engagement member includes at least one of a strap-type member and a strapless member.

120. A method of assembling a snowboard boot binding, comprising:  
providing a binding baseplate including a floor, a medial sidewall, a lateral  
20 sidewall, and a heel hoop for surrounding at least a portion of a rider's leg and which extends rearwardly and upwardly from said baseplate floor, wherein an opening extends between the heel hoop and a rearward edge of the baseplate floor that is adapted to receive at least a portion of a heel region of a snowboard boot inserted into the snowboard boot binding; and

25 covering at least a portion of the opening with a snow gasket to prevent snow from passing through the opening and accumulating on the baseplate floor.

121. The method recited in claim 120, wherein said snow gasket includes a frame.

122. The method recited in claim 120, wherein said snow gasket has a variable  
30 shape.

123. The method recited in claim 120, wherein said snow gasket is compliant and will assume the general shape of a heel end of said snowboard boot upon insertion of said snowboard boot into said snowboard boot binding.

124. The method recited in claim 120, wherein said snow gasket is removably mounted to said base.

125. The method recited in claim 120, wherein said snow gasket is selected from the group of natural fabrics, plastic fabrics, elastomeric fabrics, and combinations  
5 of any of the foregoing.

126. The method recited in claim 125, wherein said snow gasket includes a mesh-type fabric.

127. The method recited in claim 120, wherein said snow gasket extends from at least one of said medial baseplate sidewall, said lateral baseplate sidewall and said  
10 baseplate floor.

128. The method recited in claim 127, wherein said snow gasket extends from two of said medial baseplate sidewall, said lateral baseplate sidewall and said baseplate floor.

129. The method recited in claim 127, wherein said snow gasket extends from  
15 said medial sidewall, said lateral sidewall, and said base floor.

130. The method recited in claim 120, wherein said snow gasket includes predetermined regions having enhanced properties compared to other regions of said snow gasket, said enhanced properties including at least one of durability, abrasion resistance, and stretch.

20 131. The method recited in claim 130, wherein an upper portion of said snow gasket has better stretch properties than a lower or intermediate portion of said snow gasket.

132. The method recited in claim 130, wherein said intermediate portion of said snow gasket has better abrasion resistance properties than each of a top portion and  
25 a lower portion of said snow gasket.

133. The method recited in claim 130, wherein said lower portion of said snow gasket has better durability properties than each of an intermediate portion and an upper portion of said snow gasket.

30 134. The method recited in claim 120, wherein said snow gasket includes a lower end and an upper end, and said snow gasket is biased towards said upper end.